



## County of San Diego - Parks and Open Space Program

Contributing to the County of San Diego Strategic Plan Environment Initiative

*"Promote natural resource management strategies that ensure environmental preservation, quality of life, and economic development"*

## New Regular Feature: Discover San Diego's Biodiversity This Issue: FALLBROOK



California Gnatcatcher, Photo: Joe Fuhrman

The area surrounding the Santa Margarita River is home to much of San Diego's biodiversity. Several of the 27 birds protected by MSCP can be found in 8 nearby preserves,

maintained by the Fallbrook Land Conservancy (FLC). The California gnatcatcher can be spotted from the seven trails that cross the Santa Margarita River. Nearby is the 46-acre Los Jilgueros Preserve.

Over 50 different species of birds have been spotted from the 1.5 mile trail that loops this preserve. Native plant life is also very abundant with over 100 types of drought-tolerant and fire-resistant plants exhibited in the Firescape Garden.

The FLC Wildflower and Revegetation group has an extensive variety of native plants displayed near the south parking lot. Over 200 oaks, sycamores and alders have been planted on the reserves to enrich the beauty of the area. The FLC maintains over 500 acres of land with countless volunteers who keep the reserves pristine. The preserves in Fallbrook are an exceptional place to observe much of San Diego's the native plant and animal life. More information about FLC can be found at <http://www.sdllcc.org/flc/>; or by calling (760) 728-0889.

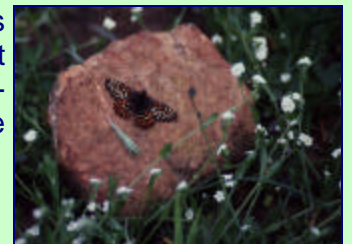
## North County MSCP Update

The draft text of the North County MSCP Subarea Plan is scheduled to be completed by the end of November 2004. County staff is gathering stakeholder input on topics to be addressed in the draft plan including: working landscapes, mitigation standards,

narrow endemics and vernal pools. The County will be providing notice of the availability of the draft plan to all property owners within the North County MSCP Subarea. In addition, a consultant has been selected to prepare the state and federal environmental documentation for the draft plan. For further information contact Jeremy Buegge at (858) 694-3719.

## Quino Checkerspot Butterfly Amendment to County MSCP

The California Department of Fish & Game has provided grant funding to study the effectiveness of habitat enhancement studies for the Quino Checkerspot Butterfly. These experiments will be led by biologists from San Diego State University. They will investigate the effectiveness of various techniques for habitat restoration including controlled burns, herbicide application, and seeding with native plants.



These studies will be part of the MSCP amendment to gain coverage for the Quino checkerspot butterfly which includes newly available data, recent comments from US Fish & Wildlife Service and a finalized Recovery Plan. Once all required documents are completed, the environmental review process on the entire amendment package can begin.

The Quino checkerspot butterfly has a wingspan averaging 3 centimeters adorned with a white, brown and orange checkered covering. It is now listed as an endangered species and its populations are limited to areas in San Diego County, Riverside and Baja. For further information contact Tom Oberbauer at (858) 694-3701.



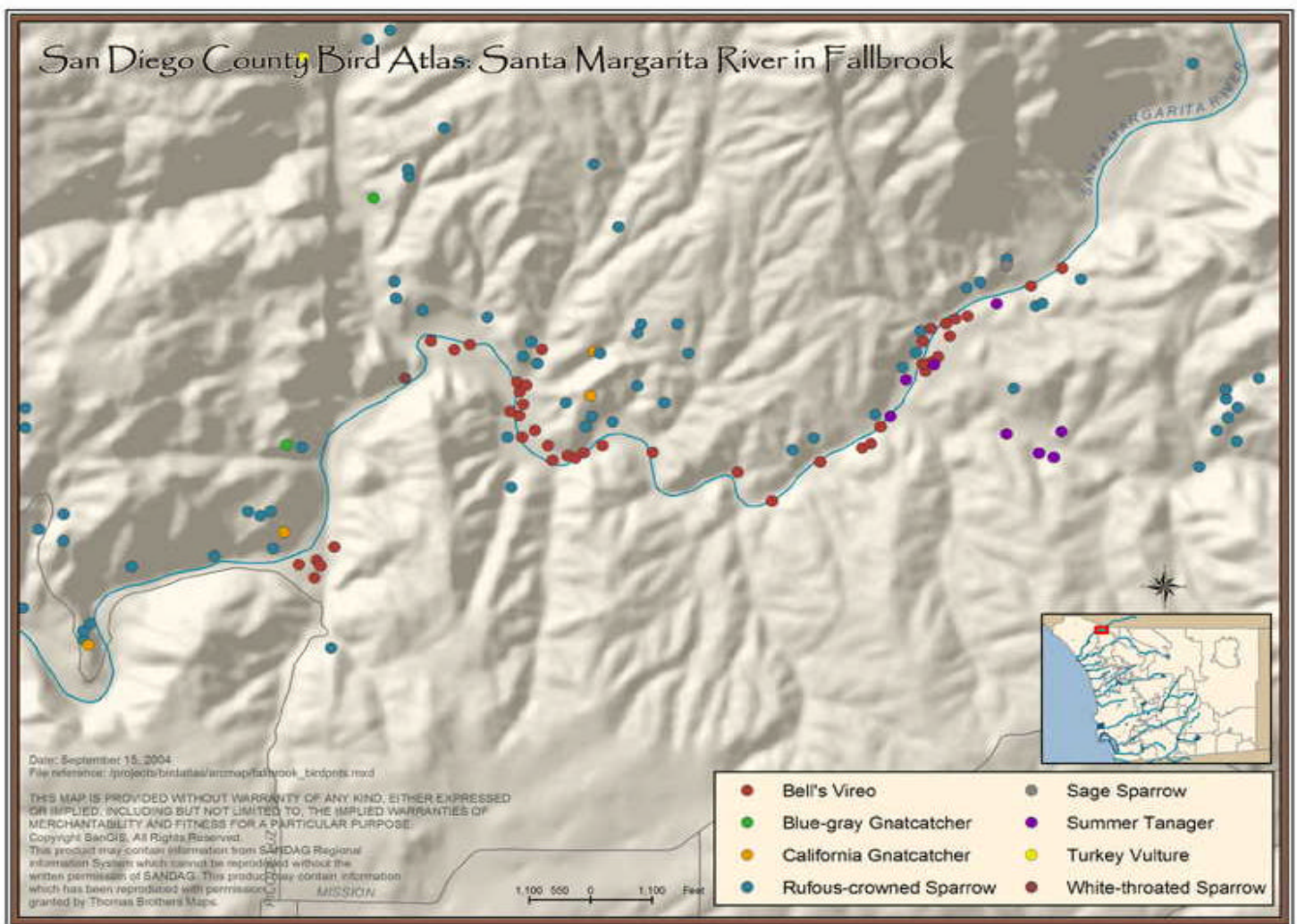
## Arriving this Winter: San Diego County Bird Atlas

The San Diego Natural History Museum has worked with several public and private partners to create the *San Diego County Bird Atlas*. This 800 page book will include seasonal distributions, nesting information and taxonomy of every known bird in the county, nearly 500 species.

Hundreds of volunteers have recorded five years of field observations. This information was transferred to maps using the Geographic Information System by Melanie Casey of the County Department of Planning and Land Use.

"MSCP will utilize these maps and the future mammal atlas when planning future conservation areas" says Trish Boaz, County MSCP Environmental Resource Manager.

The map below shows bird sitings along the Santa Margarita River in Fallbrook. The atlas is expected to be released in Winter 2005.





## Proving Partnerships Work: Natural Community Conservation Planning Partnership



For several years now, the U.S. Congress along with previous Administrations have generously supported our ongoing work to effectively plan for economic growth and land conservation in Southern California. The Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) Partnership (formerly known as the 5-County Funding Group) is a nonpartisan coalition comprised of business, development, landowner, conservation and local government representatives from San Diego, Riverside, Orange, San Bernardino and Los Angeles Counties and facilitated by The Nature Conservancy.

This unprecedented alliance collectively pursues funding for all priorities knowing that working together will bring greater success than competing separately. The NCCP Partnership and its strategy are strongly supported by the local building industry, public utilities, and alliances of major land owners, public interests, conservation groups and municipalities. The group also works together with representatives from local, state and federal agencies to ensure that their funding goals are among the highest priorities for the region. Representatives of the NCCP Partnership traveled to Washington D.C. in March 2004 asking for support of the following Fiscal Year 2005 appropriations requests:

### Southern California Projects

#### **Land and Water Conservation Fund**

- \$3 million, San Diego National Wildlife Refuge
- \$2 million, Otay Mountain Wilderness Area
- \$1 million, Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument
- \$3 million, Desert Wilderness Inholdings Program

**Fish and Wildlife Service Consultation Budget**  
\$1.75 million to support continued NCCP planning in Southern California

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**  
\$2 million, Special Area Management Plans, wetland resources

*Continued on page 5*

## Senate Appropriations Committee Approves FY 2005 Interior Bill

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved the FY2005 Interior Appropriations legislation that includes funding in the amount of \$1 million for San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Land Acquisition.

The goals of the San Diego Refuge Complex are: to preserve and recover endangered species; protect migratory bird habitat; preserve the region's unique biological diversity; and provide visitors with high quality opportunities for wildlife-dependent activities.

All of the refuges in the San Diego Refuge Complex have been designated "Globally Important Bird Areas" by the American Bird Conservancy and the newest refuge, South San Diego Bay, was recently designated as a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve site.

Although not included in the Senate Appropriations approval, as part of the Southern California NCCP Partnership, the County is continuing to request Federal Legislators' support of the House version of the FY 05 Interior Appropriations bill, which includes Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Program funding in the amount of \$1.75 million for the Southern California NCCP Partnership. These monies will enable Partnership members to conduct baseline species and habitat surveys and inventories, prepare plans and environmental documents, and participate in outreach activities.







## Protecting the Public's Health, Safety and Welfare: County of San Diego Fire Fuels Reduction Program

Years of drought in Southern California have diminished forest health and provided a ready home to insects, including the opportunistic bark beetle, which has resulted in widespread infestation reaching epidemic levels leaving stretches of forests with stockpiles of dead or dying trees throughout San Diego County. Estimates of conifer tree mortality in various communities range as high as 80%. Many of these dead, dying and diseased trees are in populated areas near homes and evacuation corridors and pose a fire and falling hazard. These fuels must be managed in populated areas to protect life and property.



Through the Forest Area Safety Task Force (FAST), local, state and federal agencies are working together to evaluate and prioritize areas where dead, dying and diseased trees and other vegetation should be removed. Earlier this year, the County received nearly \$40 million in federal grant money from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the United States Forest Service and the County has allocated an additional \$5 million of its funds to this project. The County established the Fire Safety and Fuels Reduction Program to use this grant money to remove dead, dying and diseased trees within 200 feet of a structure or within 200 feet of an evacuation corridor in the three priority areas determined by the FAST Force. These areas are Palomar Mountain, the Greater Julian Area and the Lost Valley Area. It is estimated that 64,000 acres of bark beetle-killed trees are scattered throughout these three priority areas.

Property owners eligible to participate in this voluntary, free program will receive letters in the mail with a Right to Enter form that must be signed and returned to the County. Then dead, dying and diseased trees will be marked on participating properties by registered professional foresters and removed by a County contractor.

For more information on the Fire Safety and Fuels Reduction Program, please visit our web site at [www.sdcdpw.org/tree/](http://www.sdcdpw.org/tree/) or call our hotline at 1-866-402-6044.





## MILLIONS IN GRANTS RECEIVED TO SUPPORT LAND ACQUISITION AND CONSERVATION PLANNING FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES IN SAN DIEGO

City of San Diego and County of San Diego MSCPs: \$4,402,238. The grant will be used to acquire parcels of land on Otay Mesa that make up a large part of the southern portion of lands within the Multi-Habitat Planning Area (MHPA), the City of San Diego's targeted preserve area under the MSCP. Because of their size and location, the parcels are crucial for protecting the integrity of the MHPA along the U.S./Mexico border and for connecting the southern portion to other MHPA areas to the north. The parcels support a number of listed and rare habitats and species, including the threatened coastal California gnatcatcher, burrowing owl, cactus wren, and species endemic to the San Diego region such as San Diego barrel cactus and snake chollas. There are several vernal pools on the parcels, some of which support the federally listed endangered San Diego fairy shrimp, California orcutt grass and San Diego button celery. Acquisition of the Crest Tract is a high priority for San Diego County's MSCP. The Crest Tract supports threatened California gnatcatcher and San Diego thornmint, and provides upland habitat for the federally listed arroyo toad. In addition, numerous other MSCP covered species are known in the area. The Crest tract provides a key linkage between the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge to the south and the State-owned Crestridge Preserve. This approximately 1,400 acre tract includes numerous parcels, which if allowed to develop, would result in a fragmented landscape that will preclude connectivity between two large conserved areas.

Fieldstone: \$1,512,900. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is awarding a grant to acquire the Batiquitos Bluffs parcel. The tract is central to a large expanse of wildlife habitat that includes the Batiquitos Lagoon and habitat to be preserved in the Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP) to the north, and the only contiguous corridor between the lagoon and habitat conserved through the Fieldstone Habitat Conservation Plan to the south and east. The property is within the proposed MHCP preserve. It supports the federally threatened gnatcatcher and is within its designated critical habitat. A variety of native vegetation communities occur on the parcel including coastal sage scrub, wetlands, and one of the largest remaining expanses of southern maritime chaparral, which is a rare and declining vegetation type, that likely supports the federally listed Del Mar manzanita and Encinitas baccharis and possibly the federally listed Orcutt's spineflower.

Ramona Grasslands: \$500,000. This acquisition will protect intact and undisturbed grassland in Santa Maria Valley, benefiting Stephen's kangaroo rat, arroyo toad, San Diego fairy shrimp, and coastal California gnatcatcher. The grasslands contain numerous vernal pools and will link adjacent parcels into a contiguous preserve of nearly 2,000 acres.

*Continued from page 3: NCCP Partnership*

### Nationwide programs

Fish and Wildlife Service Cooperative Endangered Species Fund — \$100 million

Department of Defense Private Lands Initiative — \$250 million

Department of Agriculture Farm Bill Programs — \$1.6 billion

**Editor:** Trish Boaz; **Contributors:** Thomas Oberbauer, Jeremy Buegge and Rick Sakow of the County of San Diego Planning and Land Use, MSCP Division; Melanie Casey, GIS Analyst, County of San Diego



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